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TO: House Finance Committee

FROM: Susan Zoll, PhD

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DATE: April 8, 2021

RE: Testimony in support of Child Care Budget Article (H6122, Article 13, section 6) and Representative Grace Diaz's Child Care is Essential Act (H5672)

Dear Member of the Finance Committee,

In this year of unparalleled hardship impacted by the effects of the pandemic, our nation stands at a crossroad to determine how we best move forward together. Locally, as small businesses throughout our state worked diligently to keep their enterprises afloat, two sectors of Rhode Island's workforce stand out: health care workers, keeping our communities safe; and early childhood educators.

In no uncertain terms, **RI's early childhood workforce supported our state economy** because families had continued access to child care allowing them to return to their jobs.

But Rhode Island families now need our support. Over the past two decades, middle-class wages have barely kept pace with the rate of inflation and necessary costs such as housing, education, health care, and child care - all have risen considerably. For low-income families the impact is even more dire. Parenthood shouldn't feel like a "relentless series of financial challenges." (2019, [American Progress](#))

Two pieces of legislation are before you today can help alleviate some of this burden. I ask you to **support both the Child Care Budget Article (H6122, Article 13, section 6) and Representative Grace Diaz's Child Care is Essential Act (H5672)**. In the short-term, these funds will allow greater access to child care for working families. Longitudinally, a public investment in child care can effectively act as a wage increase for families who are often in their lowest earning years as young adults.

I appreciate your consideration on behalf of Rhode Island families.